

What Do You Think About the Christ?



Part 2 of 3

Dallas Burdette December 21, 1997

Thrust statement: **He is the Christ, the Son of God.**

Scripture reading: **Matthew 22:42**

What do you think about the Christ? There is no one here today who has not asked themselves that question. For almost two thousand years, men and women have searched for an answer to that controversy. In examining this controversy, one is confronted with various responses down through the centuries. Why is this question so important? One's eternal destiny depends upon a proper response to this discussion. Is he god or man? Did he preexist before becoming man? Is he eternal? These are questions that one must solve in seeking a solution to the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees: **"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"** (Matthew 22:42).[\[1\]](#)

In the previous message (part 1), we observed, as reported in the gospel of Luke, certain political events that surrounded the Bethlehem manger. Also, we briefly viewed Matthew's account of Jesus as teacher. Following these two explorations about Jesus, we then inspected Jesus as physician. Everyone must continue his or her quest for an answer to that penetrating question asked by Jesus.

In our search for an appropriate answer, let us go to those who knew him to determine their response to the famous question. Let us travel to those who knew him and ask what they thought about him. If you want to find out about a man, then, inquire from those who knew him best. In the last message, we explored what the Pharisees thought about him; you remember their response: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" ([Luke 15:2](#)).

Well, today, I want to continue to follow this line of reasoning – What others thought about him. In this particular quest, one wishes to be non-partisan in order to arrive at an in-depth perception that is not narrow-minded. This neutrality demands that one go to the enemies as well as to his friends. Why? If one were to go only to those who liked him, one might answer that he or she is blind. Again, one might accuse the believer of one-sidedness by saying, "You cannot get anything good out of him, unless it be in his favor. It is a one-sided affair." So we shall not rely totally upon those who liked him, but we shall also push on to his enemies, to those who hated him, persecuted him, cursed him, and slew him. In the first part of this message, we addressed the Pharisees' evaluation of him and discovered their remarks quite revealing as to their perception of Jesus' character.

To keep up this investigation, I want to reflect on Martha (sister of Mary), a dear friend of Jesus to determine her perception of his miraculous powers – even to raise the dead; and, also to reflect upon a member of the ruling council in Jerusalem to ascertain additional remarks about his reaction to the miraculous abilities of Jesus. In addition to these two witnesses, we shall also call upon other witnesses. We will summon, for example, Caiaphas (chief priest when Christ was crucified), Pilate (governor of Judea), Judas (one of his disciples who betrayed him), the centurion (present at the crucifixion), the thief (one to whom Jesus addressed), John the Baptist (relative and forerunner of Jesus), Peter (a disciple), John (the beloved disciple), Thomas (the one who doubted the resurrection), Saul (one who persecuted the faith and later became a disciple of Jesus), angels of God, redeemed saints, and, finally, the testimony of God Himself.

What Others Thought About Him

First, let us go to the home of Martha and Mary, friends of his, in Bethany. To set the stage for Martha's remarks about Jesus, let us approach John's narrative about the death of Lazarus, the brother of these two sisters. John begins by saying,

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Jesus said to her, "**Your brother will rise again.**" Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?**" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" ([John 11:17-27](#)).

First of all, Martha knew that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. When Jesus said that he would rise again, Martha responded by saying that he would rise in the resurrection at the last day. During the course of the conversation she confesses that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world" ([John 11:27](#)). Ultimately, Jesus called Lazarus from the grave ([John 11:43](#)), once more demonstrating his messianic authority. This miracle only confirms what Martha confessed -- He is "the Christ, the Son of God." One cannot help but wonder if Martha had previously heard that soul-searching question that Jesus asked the Pharisees. What does Martha believe about the Christ. She says that he is the "Son of God." How do you answer this question? Do you believe who he is "the Christ, the Son of God"?

Let us now call upon another witness that talked with Jesus to get his perception. To do this, let us enter the night scene of a Pharisee in Jerusalem as he approaches him. This witness, a member of the ruling council, came to Jesus by night in a solitary meeting with Jesus. During this meeting, this man's confession about the miraculous powers of Jesus is quite revealing. Just who is this man? It is Nicodemus; you remember the story of Nicodemus, don't you? What is so significant about his remarks to Jesus?

Listen to John as he relates the personal meeting, "He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him'" ([John 11:27](#)). Did you observe the words "we know." This knowledge about

Jesus' miraculous power was not a secret. The ruling council knew that for one with such miraculous powers, he had come from God. We have no record that Jesus asked him the specific question that he asked the Pharisees, unless he was present when Jesus asked the Pharisees in general. Nevertheless, he knew that Jesus was different from other men – He came from God.

Nicodemus's words are worth citing again in order to give emphasis to how Nicodemus reacted to Jesus in his nightly rendezvous with the master -- "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him" ([John 11:27](#)). He knew that there was something special about Jesus, something that was not true with other men. There was no denying the miraculous signs. As you read about the miracles in the Gospels, how do you answer the question?

Let us call upon another witness who participated in his trial, namely, Caiaphas; this man was his enemy.[\[2\]](#) John details the events leading up to Jesus' encounter with this archenemy. Before examining the testimony of Caiaphas, let us turn to the preceding events leading up to this interview. John informs us that

the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people ([John 18:12-14](#)).

Then, John graphically narrates the dialogue between Jesus and the high priest Annas.

Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest ([John 18:19-24](#)).

Matthew is the one who details the conversation between Caiaphas and Jesus. Following the accusations against Jesus, accusations that were false, the high priest Caiaphas said to Jesus: "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God ([Matthew 26:63](#))." Jesus responds by saying, "'Yes, it is as you say,'" . . . 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'" ([Matthew 26:64](#)).

Do you remember the question that Jesus had earlier asked the Pharisees? "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" ([Matthew 22:42](#)). In the trial before the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas asked Jesus to tell them (1) if he was the Christ and (2) if he was the Son of God. Jesus answered by saying, "Yes, it is as you say." It is at this point that Caiaphas exclaimed: "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy" ([Matthew 26:65](#)). He was so enraged at Jesus that "he tore his clothes" ([26:65](#)). What did they have against Jesus? Only this, he claimed to be the Christ, the Son of God.

Let us briefly call attention to one more witness today. The eyewitness we call upon to enter the witness box is none other than Pilate. Since Pilate interrogated Jesus and talked with him face to face, then,

Pilate makes an excellent witness. Matthew informs us that after the Sanhedrin's trial, they decided to turn him over to Pilate. He writes: "Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor" ([Matthew 27:1](#)). What was Pilate's reaction to Jesus after examination? Listen to Luke's account of Pilate's remarks to the chief priests and rulers of the people.

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and then release him" ([Luke 23:13-17](#)).

Pilate found no basis for their charges, and he also asserts that Herod himself did not find any basis for charges to be laid against Jesus. Such is the testimony of the men who examined him. And, as Jesus stands there in the midst of this mob, suddenly, a man elbows his way toward Pilate, while he was sitting on the judge's seat, and hands him a note from his wife. The note reads: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him" ([Matthew 27:19](#)).

In closing this message for today, I ask you the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees: "**What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?**" ([Matthew 22:42](#)). I plead with you today to accept Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Why delay your salvation? Why not come today? Remember the words of John the revelator: "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" ([Revelation 22:17](#)).

PREACHED

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ENDNOTES

[\[1\]](#) Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture citations are from the NIV.

[\[2\]](#) The name Caiaphas appears eight times in eight verses in the New Testament: Matthew 26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28.